

American Girl

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* **10** ways to
be cozy
this winter

* Make pretty
valentines

* Have a ball at a
bowling party

Plus!
Meet a
snowboarder
with a **big heart**

ADVERTISEMENT



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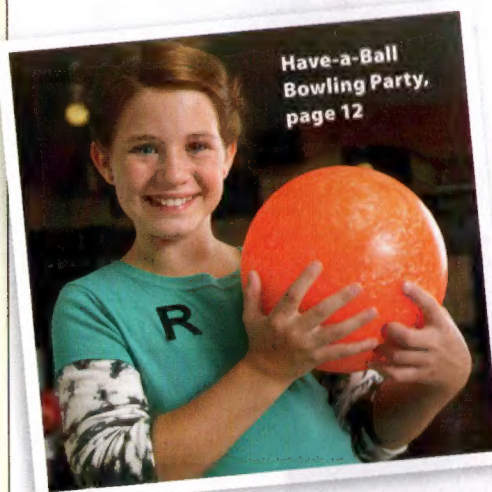
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Girls

E X P R E S S

Cozy Cup

Use an old sock to make a cool container.

Stretch a sock over a clean jar, with the top of the sock covering the mouth of the jar. Leaving enough sock to stretch beneath the jar, use a marker to mark the sock where you plan to cut it. Remove the sock, and use scissors to cut off the toe of the sock at the mark. Then put the sock back onto the jar.

Cute!



Meet an AG Reader

Jamila K.

Age 10, Massachusetts



My family includes my mom and dad, my grandparents, and my pet parakeet, Donau.

I can't live without books, my library card, and my family.

One thing most people would never guess about me: I am half German, one quarter Jamaican, and one quarter Bajan (meaning from the island of Barbados). Also, I am bilingual in English and German.

My proudest day: When I visited Washington, D.C., my mom and some friends and I were in a walkathon to help homeless people. I felt proud that I was helping.



My favorite part of AG magazine: I like Meet an AG Reader—it's fun to learn about other girls my age and see what we have in common.

Introduce Yourself!

To find out how you could be a featured reader, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Start the fun."

Shining Star



Sometimes a small idea can turn into a big deal for someone else. That's what snowboarding champion Katie W. learned after using her passion for the snowy sport to help a friend. "When I snowboard, I feel like I'm floating through the air," says the 13-year-old Wisconsin girl. "It's my happy place." But Katie felt awful when she found out that Gina, a friend from school, had cancer. Gina was fighting for her life. She also was worried about losing her hair during chemotherapy treatment.

To help Gina feel more confident about how she looked, Katie decided to collect 365 colorful snowboarding hats. "That way, she could feel good about how she looked every day of the year," says Katie. She also

got out her crochet hook and started making colorful hats decorated with pom-poms and patterns. She wrote to snowboard companies and sporting groups to ask for hat donations. She also set up collection bins at her snowboarding competitions.

According to Katie, snowboarders eat, sleep, and breathe in their hats. "Yes, I really do sleep in a snowboarding hat!" she says. Katie's little sister, Sydney (also a champion snowboarder), likes to wear a hat that looks like a cupcake.

Soon, boxes of hats began to arrive—more than 500 hats so far. "Wearing the hats made Gina less afraid of being bald," says Katie. With more than enough hats, Katie and Gina began sending hats to children's cancer units at hospitals



around the country.

It wasn't long before Gina's chemo was finished. "She's much better now," says Katie, who is still collecting and donating hats to other kids. "I was really glad to help." Of course, she's still snowboarding, too—working hard so that one day she might help the United States to shine in the Winter Olympics. "I love riding with a team," Katie says, "or with my friends."

Katie flies down the hill during a snowboard race.

You can shine, too.
Start a hat collection in your town. Ask a parent to help you check with a local hospital about what kinds of donations it can accept. Then make collection bins to place in local businesses or schools.

Cutie Quiz

Which adorable forest animal best matches your personality? Take our mini quiz to find out!

1. At school, a teacher asks for a volunteer to read out loud. You ...

- a. raise your hand. *Pick me, you think.*
- b. hide behind your book—you'll die of embarrassment if she calls on you.
- c. scan the page—do you know all the words here?

2. At a basketball game, you can be found ...

- a. romping around in the mascot costume—"GO, Tigers!"
- b. scooping snow cones at the concession stand.
- c. making up unexpected plays for the team to try.

3. At home on a Saturday, you're probably ...

- a. chatting with friends.
- b. curled up reading.
- c. playing a complicated computer game.

4. At a slumber party, you feel most comfortable ...

- a. telling jokes and making your friends laugh their heads off.
- b. sitting in a corner of the couch, relaxing and listening.
- c. figuring out the best way to arrange the sleeping bags.

5. At a babysitting job, you're happiest ...

- a. when you're playing a silly game with the child.
- b. when the child has gone to sleep and the house is quiet.
- c. when you've come up with a way to calm the child down after her parents leave.

If you picked mostly a's, you're a squirrel.
energetic
playful
funny

If you picked mostly b's, you're a deer.
quiet
thoughtful
observant

If you picked mostly c's, you're a fox.
curious
smart
clever

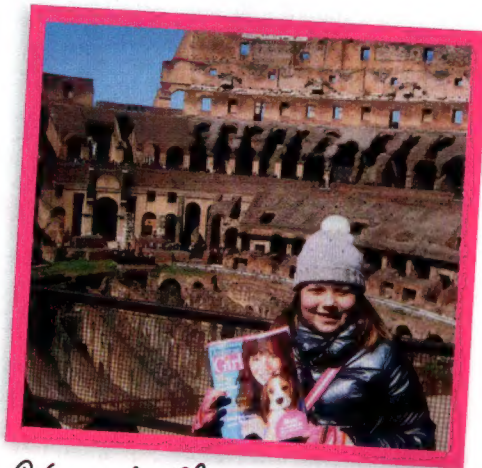


AG on the Move

Where have you and your magazine been?
Send your photos to the address on page 7.

Rome, Italy

"I was so happy to have my magazine on the long train rides we took through Italy. Here I am in Rome at the Colosseum. It's a famous structure that was built in the first century and was used for contests and games. It seated 50,000 people!"



Hannah M.
Age 12, Delaware

Calling All Writers

You could be the winner of our story contest! Here are the rules:

1. Write a creative story about anything you want, as long as it is set in September or October. All characters and story scenes need to be made up by you.
2. Your story should be no longer than 1,500 words, which is about five handwritten pages or three typed pages. Handwritten pages should be very neat.
3. Include your first and last name, address, phone number, school photo or other portrait, and birth date. You and a parent must sign your story to say that you made it up.
4. Mail your story to the address on page 7, postmarked by **February 11, 2011**. Contest winners will appear in the September/October 2011 issue. We can't wait to read your story! You'll hear from us if you win.



Here's what
we would love to
see in your story:

- * a great title
- * laugh-out-loud humor
- * a big surprise somewhere in the story
- * a happy ending

Creative Corner
Be Sweet



Cut out card. Flip over for directions.



Answer these questions, and then turn the page to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

Which of these things would you be most likely to lose?

- * money
- * an important paper
- * a favorite hat
- * a schoolbook

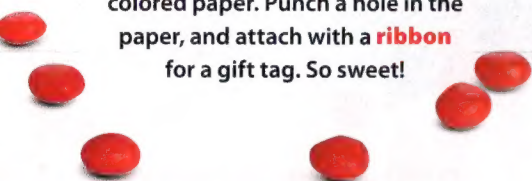
What causes you to feel most stressed?

- * running late
- * school tests or projects
- * friendship troubles
- * losing something



Be Sweet

Cut a piece of colorful **paper** to fit on the lid of a small, clean **jar**. Attach the paper with **double-stick tape**. Wash your hands, and open bags of different red **candies**. Mix up the candies and fill the jar. Replace the lid tightly. Write a valentine message on another piece of colored paper. Punch a hole in the paper, and attach with a **ribbon** for a gift tag. So sweet!



AG Poll

What girls told us at
americangirlmagazine.com



Girls are most likely to lose:

36%
an important paper

22%
a favorite hat

22%
money

20%
a schoolbook

What stresses girls most:

30%
school tests or projects

26%
friendship troubles

23%
losing something

21%
running late

To answer our weekly poll question, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Fun for Girls."

Reader Recipe

Party Popcorn

Ask an adult to pop a bag of microwave **popcorn**. Let it cool, and then pour the popcorn into a bowl. Add a handful of colorful **chocolate candies**, a small box of **raisins**, a handful of **pretzels**, and half a cup of your favorite **cereal**. Turn on a movie, sit down with a friend, and enjoy your snack.

Send your yummy—and easy—recipes to the address on page 7.



Katie L. and Lauren S.
Ages 9 and 10, New York
They're neighbors and friends!



True Story

The fish were frozen into the ice. They couldn't possibly be saved—could they?



Dear American Girl,

The oddest thing happened to my family a few winters ago. My sister, Courtney, and my dad headed out for a hike in our frozen pasture. A while later, my sister called the house and told me to hurry out back with a bucket. A creek had overflowed and frozen on the bank, trapping lots of small fish in the ice! We had to try to save them.

Courtney and I got to work chipping through the ice on the creek bank. When we reached the first fish, it was dead. My dad said that all the fish probably were dead and that there was nothing we could do. But my sister and I didn't give up. We went on to free the next fish—and found that it was alive! It was about four inches long. We put it into the bucket and let it go in a puddle that led under the ice to the creek. In all, we saved more than 40 fish that day. It felt so awesome to know that we had helped.

Sincerely,

Kendra S.
Age 11, Vermont





AG Art Gallery

Our puppy cover inspired your artwork!

Help us fill our gallery! Send color copies of artwork or photos **created by YOU** to the address below. Sorry, we can't return entries.



Sienna S.
Age 12, Illinois



Edie H.
Age 13, Minnesota



Maryam P.
Age 14, Georgia



Josie B.
Age 12, Minnesota



Holly R.
Age 12, Alabama

Write to Us

Be sure to include your

- * first and last name
- * address and phone number
- * birth date, including year
- * school photo or other picture
- * parent's signature

Send us a cool envelope! Print our address neatly on the front and your return address on the back.

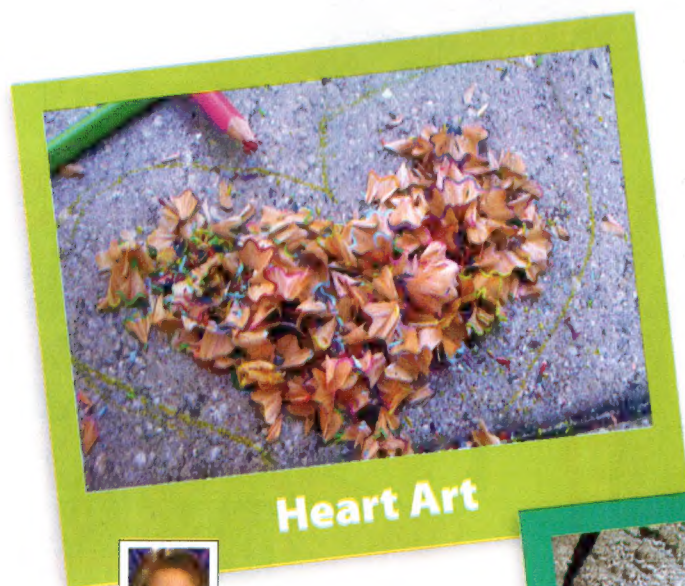
We can't print every letter, but we read everything you send to us. Hope to hear from you soon! ★



Envelope art by
Emma K.
Age 11, Tennessee

Heartfelt Photos

These girls found heart shapes in their backyards, their pets—even in a bowl. You'll just *love* their pictures!



Heart Art



McKelvie S.
Age 9, Massachusetts



Valentine on a Vine



IsaBella P.
Age 7, Minnesota



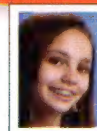
"You Rock!"



Austen K.
Age 11, Idaho



Cuddling Kitties



Allie M.
Age 14, Georgia



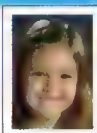
Lovely Leaves



Emily J.
Age 12, New York



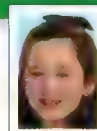
Sweet Seashell



Alison E.
Age 10, Illinois



Berry Nice



Anna S.
Age 10, Missouri



Love in the Air



Amelia R.
Age 13, Kentucky



Roller Coaster of Love



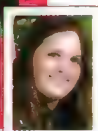
Kaitlyn A.
Age 12, Rhode Island



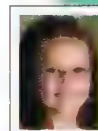
"I Ruff You!"



True Blue



Lilly H.
Age 12, Rhode Island



Emily M.
Age 8, South Carolina

New Contest: Parade Floats

Draw a parade float that's festive, funny, or just plain fabulous! Your parade float could celebrate any holiday. Or you could design your float in honor of a favorite hobby, animal, food—whatever floats your boat! Send a drawing of your float to the

address on page 7, along with your first and last name, address, school or portrait-style photo, and birth date. **Postmark deadline: February 10, 2011.** Winners will appear in the July/August 2011 issue. Sorry, but we can't return entries. ★

You Said It! ✨

If I saw a shooting star,

I'd wish for...

a lifetime supply of
books.



Christina W.
Age 10, Pennsylvania

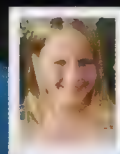
Giant pandas

to be safe enough to be taken off
the endangered species list.



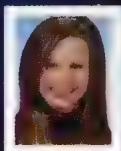
Virginia L.
Age 10, North Carolina

my own **horse.**



Hannah R.
Age 10, Michigan

everyone in
the world to be treated
equally.



Maddie U.
Age 13, South Carolina

a **cure**
for diabetes.



Madison B.
Age 11, Wisconsin

a perfect score
on the balance beam at a
gymnastics
meet.



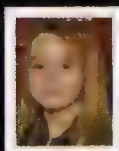
Elizabeth P.
Age 10, Georgia

a husky
puppy.



Becca C.
Age 10, Arizona

the chance
to see my face in a
magazine!



Sadie R.
Age 8, Idaho



Next question!

American Girl has been in business for 25 years, and we invite you to celebrate our 25th birthday with us! Fill in the blanks of this sentence:

"American Girl makes me feel _____ because _____."

Maybe American Girl makes you feel happy because you always have fun playing with your doll. Or perhaps you feel confident because an American Girl book helped you to stand up to a bully. Tell us what American Girl means to you and how your inner star shines.



Send your answers
to the address on page 7.
Postmark deadline:
February 10, 2011.
Some answers will appear
in the July/August
2011 issue. ★

Have-a-

Bol



Bowling
Party


Bowl with
your friends
and show
how you roll!




Rockin'
Tiger



★ Jumping
★ Pixie ★



Amazing
Cookie



Magical
★ Boots ★

Bowling Nicknames

Once all your guests arrive, create silly bowling nicknames. Choose an adjective that starts with the same letter as your first name. Then combine it with a favorite pet's name. (For example, if Madison has a cat named Boots, her nickname might be Magical Boots.) Use your names throughout the party. You can even put your new names or initials on the scoreboard.

Invitation

Send a bowling ball to your guests! Using a round plastic lid as a template, trace a circle onto glitter paper. Trace another circle onto black paper. Cut out both circles with scissors. Use a hole punch to make three small holes in the glitter circle. Write party details on the black circle with gel pens. Use a gluestick to attach the two circles together (writing side out). Let dry.

Stylin' Shirts

Before heading to the bowling alley, make your own bowling shirt! Ask each guest to bring a plain colored T-shirt to the party. You provide adhesive-backed felt, rhinestone stickers, and adhesive felt letters. Each guest should trace a circle onto a piece of adhesive-backed felt (a plastic lid makes a good template). Cut out the circle and peel off the paper backing. Attach the circle to the back of a T-shirt. Add three rhinestone stickers for the bowling ball's holes. Each guest can also put her initial on the front of her shirt using an adhesive felt letter.





Bowling Queen

Before the party, make a "bowling queen" trophy. Paint a small Styrofoam ball with acrylic paint. Let dry. Using a marker, draw three black circles for the holes. Glue the ball to an upside-down disposable cup. Attach a crown sticker to the cup and write "Bowling Queen" with a marker. When a girl bowls a strike or a spare at the party, she gets to have the trophy until the next person bowls one. Whoever has the trophy at the end of the party is the Bowling Queen and takes the trophy home!

Bowler Bites

Turn chocolate cookies into mini bowling balls. Make bowling ball "holes" on top of each cookie by using white frosting to attach three mini white-chocolate chips.

Spare-Time Sipper



Cool off between turns with your own signature drink. Ask an adult to order a pitcher of juice or soda, but ask to mix different flavors together. Try cola and orange soda or lemonade and lemon-lime soda. Give your new creation a name!



Copy the Captain

Take turns being the captain of your "bowling team." The captain thinks up her own way to bowl. (She might want to try one of the ideas below.) Then when the other bowlers take their turns, they have to bowl the way the captain did. Play until everyone has had a turn as the captain.



Roll the ball with both hands while your feet are wide apart.

Turn around in a circle twice before you bowl.

Bowl in slow motion.

Sit on the floor and push the ball with your feet.

Roll the ball with your opposite hand.

Here are some wacky ways to bowl!

Sweet Shoes

Decorate sandwich cookies to look like colorful bowling shoes. Using the cookie as a template, trace its shape on fruit leather using a toothpick. Cut out the shape with clean scissors. Attach it to the top of the cookie with a thin layer of frosting. Use additional frosting for the shoe's opening. Draw laces with tube frosting.



Award Winners

Send each guest home with a silly award such as Best Victory Dance or Best Bowling Face. (You might want to wait until the end of the party to write the award names.) Before the party, create award certificates on pretty paper or make extra-special award buttons.

1. Using a paper punch, cut out a quarter-sized circle of white scrapbook paper.

2. Attach the paper circle to a large sew-through button with craft glue. Let dry.

3. Cut two 1-by-2-inch strips of paper. Glue the strips to the back of the button.

4. Using a thin marker, write the award names on the paper circles.



Favor Frames

Give each guest a black photo mat. Using gel pens, have each guest sign all the frames with her bowling name. Then take a team photo at the bowling alley. After the party, mail the photos to your guests so they can put them in their frames. They can also attach their awards to the frames. ★

Lend a Hand

When a friend needs you by her side, there are many ways to help. Pick from the ideas below—or make a list of your own!

by Apryl Lundsten

More great advice about helping others can be found in *Lend a Hand*.



If your friend breaks her leg, you could

- * draw a funny doodle on her cast to help her smile.
- * help her get around by bringing her crutches, opening doors for her, and assisting her when getting in and out of chairs.
- * spend an afternoon playing card games with her.

If your friend is in the hospital, you could

- * play a game with her.
- * do something special that you know she'll appreciate, such as putting a playlist together of songs she likes.
- * bring her supplies for her favorite craft.



If your friend has a family member die, you could

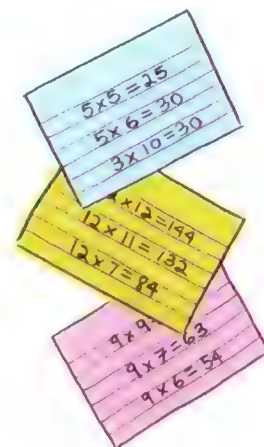
- * give her a shoulder to cry on.
- * let her know you care by telling her how important she is to you.
- * ask your parents to help you make a meal to deliver to her family.





If your friend fails a test, you could

- * offer to study together for the next one.
- * help her make flash cards so that she can study more easily on her own.
- * try to cheer her up by telling her a joke or a funny story.



If your friend has a fight with her sibling, you could

- * listen to her talk about the situation, even if she just needs to vent.
- * tell her how you deal when you have arguments with your brother, sister, or other family member.
- * give her a big hug. ★



If your friend's parents are getting a divorce, you could

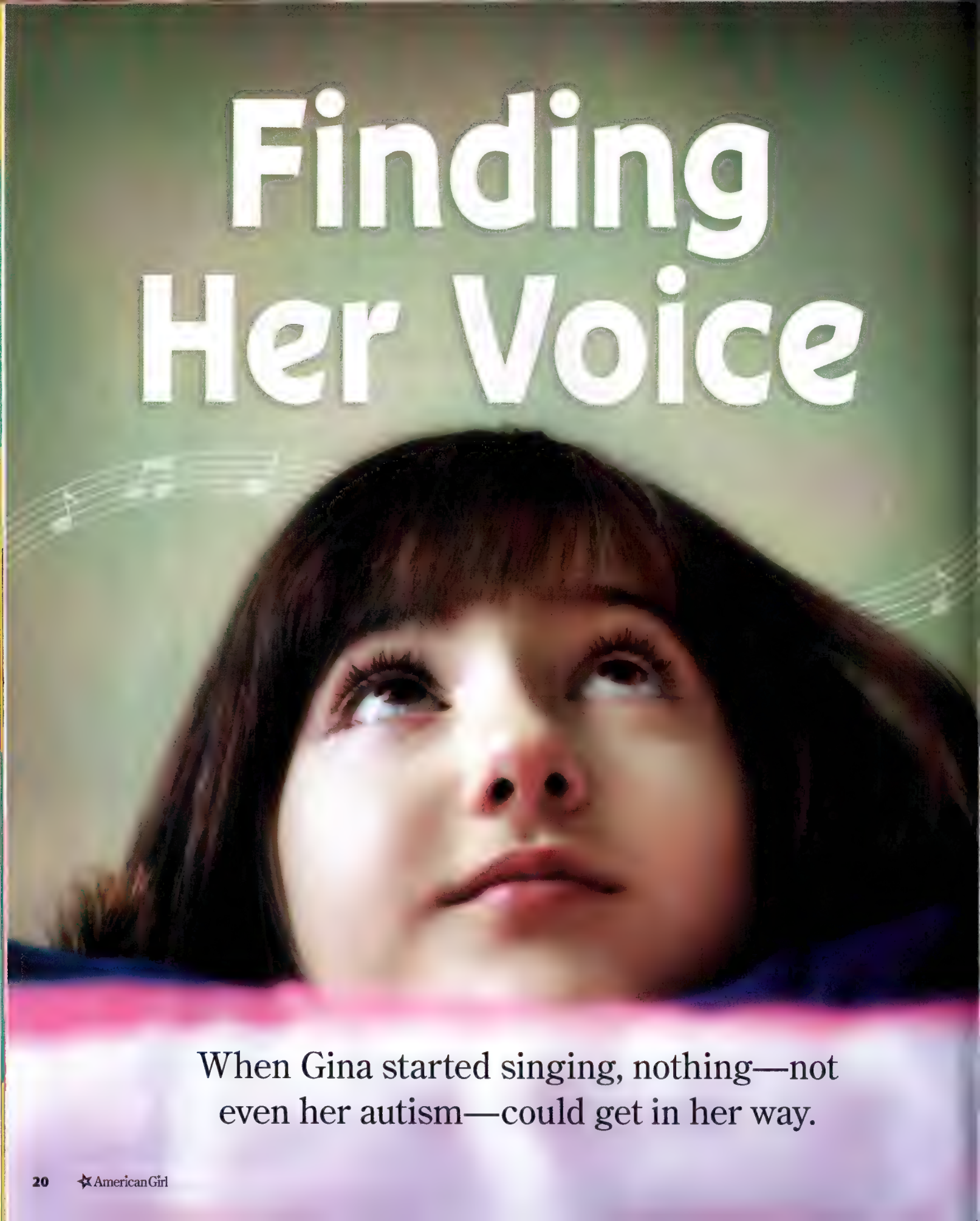
- * let her know that you'll always be her friend, no matter what.
- * tell her to call you when she needs someone to talk to.
- * invite her for a sleepover to help get her mind off things for a little while.

If your friend didn't make the soccer team or wasn't chosen for the part she wanted in the school play, you could

- * invite her to hang out on the day of the big game or night of the play to help keep her mind on fun things.
- * create a poster that says, "You're my first choice in a friend!"
- * teach her a skill from a hobby you enjoy.



Finding Her Voice



When Gina started singing, nothing—not even her autism—could get in her way.

What is autism?

Autism is a brain condition that sometimes develops in babies and toddlers. No one knows for sure what causes it, and no one has figured out how to cure it. You can't catch it from another person. Kids who have autism sometimes have a hard time communicating with others or have trouble making friends. Some can be supersensitive to noises or situations. It can be hard for them to stay in control or to calm themselves down.

For some kids, autism can be severe and very difficult to deal with. For others, the signs are so mild that you might not even notice them. It's different for everyone—which makes it hard to understand.



Everybody has a gift. Some people are great at drawing. Some people can play the piano. Others are good at doing math or playing basketball or being a very good friend. My name is Gina, and my gift is singing. I love singing so much, and I'm lucky that I get to do it. People have gotten to know me as the girl who sings the national anthem at ball games and other big events. Sometimes they're surprised to learn that I'm a person who has autism.

When Gina was about two, she hadn't started to speak. Her doctors did tests and decided that Gina had autism.

Autism caused Gina to dislike making eye contact with others—it was too intense for her. She was afraid in public and couldn't handle noisy places. Doctors told Gina's parents that they didn't

know if she would ever be able to talk. Gina started therapies right away. One was music therapy, which used song to try to help her learn words. She began by humming little melodies, and in time, she added the words to the songs.

Gina's family was overjoyed. Music had helped their daughter find her first words—and it would soon help her find so much more.

When I was about five, I had a CD of songs from a singer I really liked. I listened to it over and over. One song on the CD was *The Star-Spangled Banner*. There wasn't any music—the singer just sang by herself. I loved that song. I learned all the words, and I practiced it all the time. It felt really good to sing it, and I got really good at it.

One day, I saw someone singing my song at a



“It feels amazing to me when I sing, and it feels very good inside my heart that people like to listen to me.”

baseball game on TV. I couldn't believe it! My mom told me that someone almost always sings that song at the beginning of sporting events—and that maybe I could do that one day, too. I liked that idea. Maybe I *could* do it.

So when my mom found out that a major-league baseball team was holding tryouts for singers to perform at their spring-training games, I decided to go for it. I had just turned six. I did feel very shy and nervous about going out to sing in a loud place in front of strangers. Lots of people I didn't know were coming up to me, and the mascot scared me. But my whole family and a lot of our friends showed up to support me, and I got to do a sound check with just my family there. After that, I wasn't nervous anymore. I knew all the words to my song, and I knew I could do it.

The team picked me to perform at a game. I did it, and it felt so fantastic. It feels amazing to me when I sing, and it feels very good inside my heart that people like to listen to me.

Since that first game, Gina has given more than 100 public performances of The Star-Spangled Banner. She has sung at ball games and lots of other events, working hard to stay focused amid the noise and commotion. She's met celebrities, performed on TV, and even recorded some songs. Because people have gotten to know her for her singing, she's been able to show them a few things about autism and how kids who have it can follow their dreams.

A therapist comes into Gina's classroom to help her with schoolwork and school situations. Rather than making Gina feel like she's standing out, the

therapist helps her to blend in better and to help other students understand her. Still, the others have learned that there are certain things about Gina that make her different from them.

It doesn't feel good that other kids don't have the same problems that I do. But it's something that I just have to deal with. I've learned that it's OK to be a little different from everyone else.

Having good friends makes things easier. One of my friends—she was my first friend I met in school—stayed inside with me one time at recess when I was worried about the bugs outside. She has a very nice heart, and she understands me.

One thing I understand is that no one should ever give up on her dreams. I've gotten to do some great things, but I'll always keep on trying. I'll never let anything get in my way. I just turned nine, and right now my dream is to be a rock star. That, and I want to be a singing teacher. As a singing teacher, I'd help any kid who needed help—especially the kids who are different, like me.

Know someone who has autism?

Kids who have autism see the world differently than other people do, so they sometimes react to it in unexpected ways. If you meet someone who has autism, you can try ...

saying hello. It can be hard for some kids who have autism to approach groups of kids to make friends. But Gina says that making friends with someone who has autism isn't a big deal. "Just say hi—even if you're shy. Everyone has to get used to a new friend." That includes kids who don't have autism, too, she says.

understanding. Autism can make some kids uncomfortable in certain situations. For example, a person who has autism might be very bothered by a noisy classroom. You might have no problem with the noise, but a kid with autism might be so upset that she has to leave the room. Even though it might seem as if she is overreacting, she's just reacting to how things seem to her, which is different from how they seem to you. "To understand a kid like me, you just have to be patient," Gina says.

being kind. Words can hurt a kid with autism as much as they hurt anyone else—and sometimes more. It's harder for some kids who have autism to get over it after someone is mean to them. "It doesn't matter if people are different," Gina says. "Just try to have a nice heart." ★

Singing before
a professional
basketball game ...

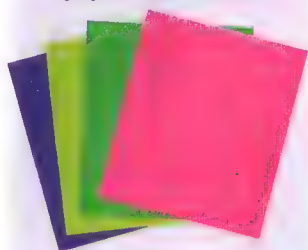
... and at an
outdoor festival

Sweet Spirals

Make valentines with a twist by adding pretty paper curlicues.

YOU WILL NEED

* Sheets of colored paper or card stock



* Scissors



* Pencil



* Cookie cutter (optional)



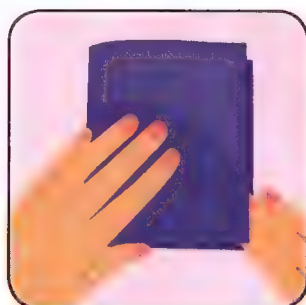
* Ruler



* Drinking straw



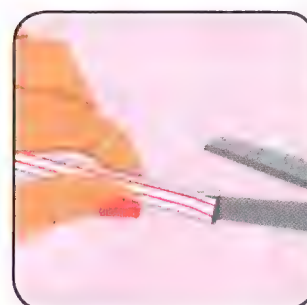
* Craft glue



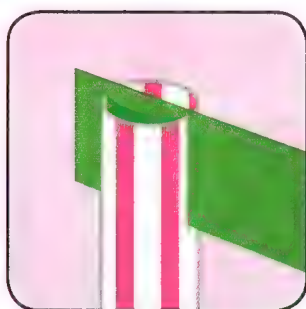
1. Cut a piece of colored paper into a 4½-by-5-inch rectangle (or smaller). Fold the paper in half to make a card. Lightly draw a heart shape on the front of the card. You may want to use a cookie cutter as a stencil.



2. On a sheet of 8½-by-11-inch paper (or larger), use a ruler to draw straight lines about ¼ inch apart. Cut along the lines to make strips. Cut the strips in half.



3. Cut 2 notches in one end of the straw. The notches should be about ¼ inch long.



4. Insert one end of a paper strip into the notches as shown.



5. Tightly wind the paper strip around the straw to make a spiral. Gently slide the paper off the straw. Make enough paper spirals to outline the heart.



6. Trace half the heart shape with craft glue. Press the spirals, one by one, onto the glue and hold until they stick. Repeat with the other half of the heart. Let dry.

Tiny Hearts

To make a mini heart, fold a paper strip in half. Unfold and curl one end of the strip toward the fold line. Repeat with the other end of the strip, curling in the opposite direction. Fold a 5-by-5½-inch sheet of paper in half. Open the paper and cut a 1-inch strip off one end. Fold again to make a card. Glue three mini hearts in a row down the flap. Write a message on the front of the card.

Happy
Valentine's
Day!



Other Twists

Make a card with hearts and spirals. Create your own one-of-a-kind design! ★



Decorate AG's Valentine Frames with spirals. Use tape to attach a photo to the back.

Feeling Frosty?

Ten ideas for staying warm and well this winter

1.

Screen Time

Feel as if you barely see the sun this time of year? Surprise—you still need sunscreen, even in the winter months. Find a face lotion with sunscreen in it, and put on a light layer every morning.



2.

Lip Tip

Licking chapped lips makes them feel better for a few minutes, but that only dries them out more. Keep a soothing lip balm with you wherever you go. Use it all day, and put some on before bed, too.



3.

Cool It Down

Brrr! You know that blast of icy cold you feel when you step out of the shower? It won't be such a shock if you turn the shower water cooler, little by little, as you're finishing up.



4.

Lotion Notion

As soon as you dry off from your shower, don't wait—slick on some moisturizing lotion right away. Your skin will absorb the lotion better when you're warm and damp, and you'll avoid getting itchy this winter.





5.

Bye-Bye, Fly-aways

Beat winter hair static with this quick trick: Rub a tiny dot of lotion onto the palms of your hands—just enough to make them shiny. Then smooth your hands over the ends of your hair. The static disappears instantly.



6.

Shower Power

Cold weather might tempt you to turn up the heat during your shower, but try not to do it—hot water can dry out your skin. Stick to short, warm showers, and your skin will thank you.



7.

Wow Your Wrists

Use scissors to cut the toes off some colorful knee socks. Pull the socks over your hands, and use a pen to mark a spot on each for your thumb to poke through. Then take off the socks and cut a tiny hole for each thumb. Instant arm warmers! (Always ask a parent for permission before cutting up clothing.)

8.

Winter Warmth



Ask a parent to help you heat a mug of water. Add a few drops of lemon juice and a few drops of honey, and stir until the honey dissolves. Sip to soothe a sore throat—or any time you want to feel warm and wonderful.



9.

Nail Knowledge

You're probably washing your hands a lot more often to protect yourself from colds and other illnesses. Hello, hangnails! Use hand lotion at least once a day, and focus on coating your cuticles to protect them.

10.

Foot Fleece

If your feet feel chilly when you crawl into bed, bunch up your warmest winter scarf and place it under the covers. If you tuck your feet loosely into the folds of the scarf, your toes will feel toasty in no time. ★



"I'm a TV Star!"

Which reality TV show would be perfect for you? Take this quiz and find out.



1. When you go to the mall, the first store you go to sells ...

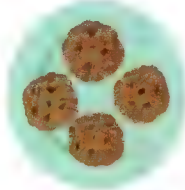
- A.** hiking equipment. You'd love to buy a new backpack to hold all of your gear.
- B.** craft supplies. You need to get colorful beads to make a new bracelet.
- C.** cooking accessories. It's the only place that has those fancy sprinkles for cupcakes.
- D.** video games. You can't wait to pick up that new karaoke game!

3. If someone put a plain piece of paper in front of you, you would ...

- A.** draw a pretty nature scene.
- B.** sketch an outfit you'd love to wear to a Valentine's Day party.
- C.** come up with creative titles for your cookie recipes.
- D.** write down lyrics for a song you'd like to sing.

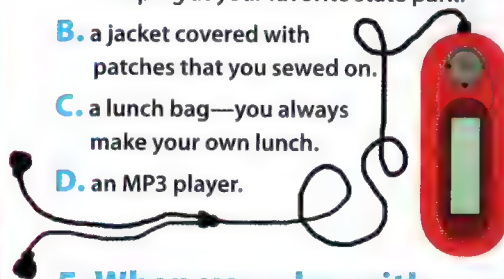
6. Which of these might be your nickname?

- A.** Monkey—people can usually find you hanging out around trees.
- B.** Sparkle—you always add that extra pizzazz to whatever you wear.
- C.** Cookie—you like to bake delicious treats for your friends.
- D.** Hummingbird—no matter where you go, you always seem to be humming a tune.



4. What is in your locker?

- A.** a picture of you and your family camping at your favorite state park.
- B.** a jacket covered with patches that you sewed on.
- C.** a lunch bag—you always make your own lunch.
- D.** an MP3 player.



5. When you play with your friends in the snow, you can be found ...

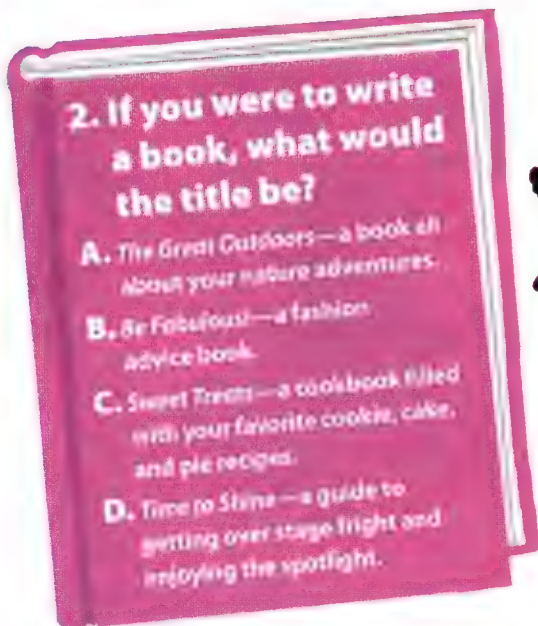
- A.** building a snow fort.
- B.** dressing up a snowperson.
- C.** passing out hot cocoa.
- D.** singing "Winter Wonderland."

7. If you were to make a handmade gift for Valentine's Day, you would ...

- A.** paint a heart-shaped rock you found in the woods.
- B.** knit a colorful scarf.
- C.** bake a batch of your famous strawberry cupcakes.
- D.** record yourself singing a heartfelt song and make a CD.

2. If you were to write a book, what would the title be?

- A.** The Great Outdoors—a book all about your nature adventures.
- B.** Be Fabulous—a fashion advice book.
- C.** Sweet Treats—a cookbook filled with your favorite cookie, cake, and pie recipes.
- D.** Time to Shine—a guide to getting over stage fright and enjoying the spotlight.



Answers

Mostly A's: Queen of the Wild

Hiking, camping, and just being outdoors are second nature to you. With your knowledge of the outdoors, you would be first on a reality show that tests a contestant's ability to survive outside and complete fun challenges. And you'd have a lot of fun doing it.

Mostly B's: The Next Fashion Star

You are known for showing your personality through your outfits, whether it's adding appliques to a T-shirt or sewing a never-before-seen skirt. Your amazing sense of style would work well on a fashion design show. It would be a "clothes" call, but there's no doubt that you would win!

Mostly C's: Kitchen Magician

What is that yummy smell coming from your kitchen? It's you, whipping up another delicious creation. You would have a lot of fun on a reality show that puts your cooking skills to the test. Once the judges taste your French silk pie, you'll be a sure winner.

Mostly D's: Singing Sensation

There's no doubt that you love to be center stage, whether it's singing in a school musical or belting out a solo in your bedroom. You dream of participating in a musical competition on TV. Millions of people seeing you sing would be really cool, and a record deal wouldn't be so bad, either! ★



Like It or Not

Lara thought the worst part of moving to a new town was missing all her old friends.

But now her cat is lost, too!

by Carolyn Mackler



Lara Andrews hated everything about Greeley. For one, it wasn't Captiva. That was in Florida, where she had lived for the first nine years of her life. She used to live on an island with the ocean on one side and a bay on the other. Now she lived in a small town up north where it was gray and cold and depressing. She used to collect shells on the beach and watch the dolphins slice above the water every afternoon. Now she slipped on the ice every time she walked down Franklin Street, and the only thing she'd collected was a shinfu of bruises.

For the past week that they'd been here, Lara's parents had been pointing out all the great things about Greeley, like how the cherry blossoms were going to be amazing when spring came, and how they'd go berry picking over the summer.

"But it's *February*," Lara moaned. "Spring is months away, and forget about summer. I'm not going to make it until summer."

But Lara knew that, like it or not, she had to make it. Her mom had gotten an exciting new job in a city a half hour away. She was starting work tomorrow, Monday morning. Lara's dad was going to stay home and write his articles during the day and hang out with Lara after school. Back in Florida, Lara's dad was free every afternoon, too. But Lara was generally too busy with her friends—collecting shells and watching dolphins and making homemade costumes for her rotund orange tabby cat, Butterball.

But here, in Greeley, Lara didn't have a single friend. All she had were her mom, her dad, and Butterball. And that's how it was going to be for the next week because Greeley Elementary School was closed for midwinter break. Lara's family had arrived in town last Tuesday, but her parents had decided to wait until after break to send her to



her new fourth grade. Even so, Lara had spent the week before at the window, watching the buses take the kids to and from school.

"I didn't have to take a bus on Captiva," Lara said to her mom one morning. "If we're in Greeley, like it or not, I'm picking *not*."

Lara saw her mom glance at her dad.

"I'm just saying," Lara added, trying to muster a smile. It was hard to smile, like she was forcing her face muscles to turn up when all they wanted to do was stay down. "Back in Captiva I could walk to school. And I had friends. And I could be outside all the time. I'm having a hard time thinking of one plus about being in Greeley."

"What about Butterball?" her mom asked.

"That's right," her dad said, nodding brightly. "That's a definite plus."

Lara had to admit that her cat's quality of life had improved in Greeley. Back in Florida, they had lived in an apartment on the second floor of a house. Butterball's only fresh-air time was on

their patio, where he used to pace the perimeter, meowing angrily. Here in Greeley, they had a backyard with trees to scratch and mice to chase and birds to stalk. Anytime Butterball wanted to go outside, he squeezed his round body through the cat door and romped around the yard.

On Monday morning, Lara's mom got dressed in a charcoal-colored suit and kissed Lara and her dad good-bye. Lara's dad jotted a few things on the grocery list and then disappeared into his office to write. In the afternoon, he was going to take Lara to a movie. That meant Lara had the whole morning with nothing to do. She spread jam on her toast and glanced at her shell project on the table. On the long drive up from Florida, Lara had started a mural where she had sketched pictures of various shells from her collecting bag. Now she was arranging the sketches on a huge piece of cardboard and gluing shells around the border.

Around ten, Lara headed to the sink to scrub off a few spiral shells. On her way back to the table, she glanced at the food in Butterball's dish. Now that was strange. Right after her mom had left, Lara had forked in a can of Oceanfish and Tuna. As disgustingly fishy as it seemed to Lara, this was Butterball's favorite wet food. He always gulped it down in less than five seconds.

But today the mound of food was still in his dish, untouched, crusty around the edges. Lara squeezed her eyes tight and tried to remember the last time she'd seen her cat. When she was falling asleep, Butterball had stretched around her head on the pillow. He did that a lot, especially since they'd moved. Butterball was generally gone in the morning, out prowling for mice. But he always returned once he smelled breakfast. Especially if breakfast was Oceanfish and Tuna.

"Dad!" Lara shouted, hurrying into his office.



Lara's dad looked up from his computer. Lara wasn't supposed to interrupt him when he was writing, but this was feeling like an emergency situation.

"I haven't seen Butterball all morning," she said, clenching the shells in her fist. "He hasn't eaten his wet food—not even a little."

"Did you look in the backyard?" Lara's dad asked. "Try shaking the cat treats."

Lara nodded and went to the mudroom to put on her boots. *Mudroom*. On Captiva, they definitely didn't have a mudroom.

Outside, it was cold with a gloomy sky. Lara stood in the backyard for several minutes, rattling a container of cat treats and calling, "Butterball! Here, kitty, kitty, kitty! *Butterbaaaaaall!*"

No Butterball. All Lara could hear was the wind rustling the bare trees. And all she could feel were her toes, which were cold. Icy cold. Painfully cold.

Lara hurried back to the house. She was just kicking off her boots when she had a sinking thought. Yesterday, as she was brushing Butterball, she had taken off his collar. It was yellow with a bell and two tags. One tag was from his old vet, and the other had Butterball's name on it and her dad's cell-phone number.

Lara dashed into the living room, hoping that

look at her and said, "Let's have lunch at home. We'll heat up a pizza."

When they walked into the kitchen, Butterball's food was still in his dish. As her dad scraped it into the trash, Lara swallowed a lump in her throat.

That night, after Lara's mom returned from work, Butterball was still missing. It was dark out, and Lara felt a mixture of scared and sad and

"I haven't seen Butterball all morning," she said, clenching the shells in her fist. "He hasn't eaten his wet food—not even a little."

her parents had buckled the collar back on. But there it was, curled up by Butterball's bed.

Lara burst into her dad's office, this time gulping back tears. "Butterball didn't come when I called. I took off his collar when I was brushing him yesterday and now, if he's lost, no one will know how to contact us."

"He's probably just exploring the neighborhood," Lara's dad said.

Lara stared sadly at her feet. "If Butterball's gone, it's all my fault."

Lara's dad pushed out of his chair and wrapped her in a hug. "He'll come back, honey. But how about we go to the early movie and maybe get lunch after? That'll keep your mind off things."

Lara generally loved movies, but today she could hardly concentrate. She tapped her feet all through the show and kept checking her watch, wondering if Butterball would be there when they got home. *And what if he isn't?* Lara thought. She had already said good-bye to her friends and Captiva Island. She couldn't handle losing her cat as well.

After the movie was over, Lara's dad took one

lonely. She sat with her mom on the couch, holding the hat she and her friends had sewn for Butterball the week before she'd left Captiva. It had ear holes and everything.

"I think he's lost for good," Lara said, wiping away tears.



On Tuesday morning, when Butterball still wasn't home, Lara wondered if maybe he had tried to walk back to Captiva. She'd heard about cats who followed their families for thousands of miles. *No*, she reassured herself. He probably was still in Greeley but was just lost and unable to find his way to Franklin Street.

Lara peeked into her dad's office. "Will you help me make missing signs for Butterball?"

"Absolutely," he said.

Lara and her dad spent the next fifteen minutes designing a sign on the computer. When they were finished, Lara studied their work. The sign said:



The photo of Lara and Butterball was taken back on Captiva, and he was wearing a special bandanna she'd made for him with pictures of canaries all over it.

Lara's dad printed out fifteen copies, and Lara grabbed a roll of clear packing tape. Then they

pulled on their boots and jackets and trekked around the neighborhood, asking store owners if they could put signs in their windows.

When they got home, Lara checked the phone to see if anyone had called. Nothing yet. Even so, as her dad heated up soup, Lara felt better knowing they'd done something to help find Butterball.

Just as they were spooning up their last bites of lunch, Lara heard a meow at the cat door.

"Butterball!" she squealed, scrambling across the room.

Lara's dad ran over, and they danced around the kitchen. Lara couldn't believe it. It was definitely Butterball. Home. Or at least as *home* as Lara could be in Greeley.

Lara heaved Butterball up into her arms and buried her face in his orange fur. As she did, something weird struck her. The whole time he'd been missing, Lara pictured Butterball huddled outside in the frozen mud. But he looked happy as ever. And even weirder, Butterball was now wearing a sleek blue collar around his neck.

That afternoon, as Lara's dad took down the missing signs, Lara fed Butterball a few cat treats and tried to imagine where he'd been for the past two days. It was strange to think about Butterball in someone else's house. *Well*, Lara thought as she removed the new blue collar and fastened on his regular yellow one, *he's with me now, just where he belongs*. Then she shoved the blue collar far behind the stack of cat food cans. Now that Butterball was back, Lara didn't feel like thinking about the time he had been gone.



Two days later, Lara and her dad were pulling their new sled down State Street. It had snowed last night, so Lara's dad had bought a red plastic sled in the hopes of persuading Lara to fall madly in love with Greeley.

They had just crossed an intersection when Lara sucked in her breath.

"What?" her dad asked.

Lara pointed to the nearest store window, and they both read the sign taped on:



On the bottom was a picture of a boy with brown hair. And in his lap, staring out with a wide face and huge green eyes, was Butterball.

"Pumpkin?" Lara and her dad exclaimed at the same time.

Lara's dad pulled out his cell and dialed the number on the sign. He handed the phone to Lara.

"Hello?" a woman's voice asked.

"I'm calling about—um, Pumpkin," Lara said.

"Oh!" the woman chirped. "Let me grab Rex. He'll be so excited."

As Lara waited, she stared at the boy in the picture, smiling as he cuddled Butterball.

"Hey," a kid's voice said after a moment. "This is Rex."

"Hi, my name is Lara and I just saw your sign about the cat."

"Yeah?" the boy asked.

"Only there's a problem." Lara paused and glanced at her dad. "The cat isn't a stray. And he isn't named Pumpkin. He's my cat. He ran away for a few days and then he came home."

There was silence on the other end.



"Oh," the boy finally said. "Oh, well."

"Yeah," Lara continued. "So I just wanted to tell you that. I'm sorry."

"Okay," the boy said in a flat voice. "Thanks for calling."

Lara hung up and handed the phone to her dad. They continued on to the sledding hill. Lara had to admit that it was amazing, especially when she flew over the bumps. Even so, something was heavy on her mind. She couldn't stop thinking about how much she missed Butterball when he was away, and how even though this Rex kid had her cat for just two days, maybe he felt the same way.

"Dad?" Lara asked as she dragged her sled up from the final run. "Do you still have that kid's number in your phone?"

"Sure," her dad said. "Why?"

"Can I call him again?"

Lara's dad handed her the phone. She pulled off her mitten with her teeth and tucked the phone

against her ear. This time, when the woman answered, Lara asked for Rex.

"May I tell him who's calling?" she asked.

"It's Lara again," she said, "with the cat."

When the boy came on, Lara said, "His name is Butterball, but you can call him Pumpkin if you want. He looks like a pumpkin."

"That's what I thought," Rex said, laughing.

"And if you want to come over and pet him

**"I meant what I said.
You can come see
him anytime."**

sometime, that's fine," Lara added.

"Where do you live?" the boy asked.

Lara almost said her old address on Captiva but then stopped herself. "We're on Franklin Street. Forty-six."

"We're on Chapel and State," he said.

"I just moved here," Lara said. "I don't know where that is."

"Five minutes away."

"So I guess Butterball didn't make it very far," Lara said.

Lara's dad gestured that it was time to leave the hill. As he pulled the sled, Lara pressed the phone against her ear. "I meant what I said. You can come see him anytime."

"That sounds good," Rex said. "I actually have some things I bought for him. A catnip mouse and a string toy. Catnip makes him crazy."

"I know!" Lara said, giggling.

As Lara followed her dad down the sidewalk, Rex asked where she had moved from. She told him about Captiva Island and how she had to leave midway through fourth grade. Rex mentioned that he was in fourth grade at Greeley Elementary. When he said the name of his teacher, Lara squealed so loudly her dad stared back at her with an eyebrow raised.

"That's going to be my teacher, too!" Lara said.

Lara and Rex made a plan for a Butterball-Pumpkin visit later that afternoon. Even so, they ended up talking the whole way back to her house. The most exciting thing Rex told her was that their class was putting on a play and needed more kids to paint sets and design costumes. When Lara heard that, she squealed again. This time her dad raised both eyebrows.

By the time Lara said good-bye to Rex, she could tell they were going to be friends. As she stomped off her boots in the mudroom, she stared into the backyard. Butterball was attempting to hide behind a skinny tree. If Lara scrunched her eyes really tight, she could almost imagine how beautiful it was going to be in the spring, when the flowers poked up. It actually wasn't even so bad



now, especially with this recent coating of snow. If she was in Greeley, like it or not, Lara thought, maybe she'd pick *like* after all. ★



Meet the Author



Age 9 Now

Carolyn Mackler

When I was growing up, we had a large orange cat named Lionel. Now and then Lionel would go missing for a few days, and when he came home, he smelled like someone's perfume or smoke from a fireplace. We always used to wonder who he visited, but unfortunately we could never ask him!

Clever Caps

Turn old socks, sleeves, and gloves into winter hats that your doll will love!

Simple Scarf Set

Cut both sleeves off a sweater, and use small Glue Dots to "hem" the cut edges. Place the cuff of the first sleeve over your doll's head, and pull the second cuff over the first one. Pull both sleeves to the front for the scarf.



Ask an adult if it's OK to cut up your old clothing items. Also check that the fabric dyes won't bleed color. If the adult is unsure, never let the caps get wet, get hot, or touch your doll's skin.

Curly Cutie

Gather the fingers of a glove, and wrap a rubber band around them. Snip off the fingertips, and then cut the fingers into narrow strips. Fold up the cuff.

Knit Trick

Turn a slipper sock inside out, and slip the cuff on your doll's head. Gather the extra sock fabric at the crown, and wrap a rubber band around it. Remove the sock, and cut off the extra fabric almost to the rubber band. Turn the sock right-side out, hiding the rubber band inside. Use fabric glue to attach a pom-pom to the top of the hat. Let dry.

Teeny Beanie

Tie a knot in the toe of a sock. Slip the sock on your doll so that the heel rests on the back of her head.



Snow Sparkler

Gather the fingers of a white glove, and tie them together with a shiny ribbon. Snip off just the fingertips. Use Glue Dots to attach sequins around the cuff. ★

Puzzle Palooza







Want to be
an AG Puzzle Pal?
Send puzzles, secret
codes, or brainteasers
created by YOU to
the address on
page 7.

Queens of Hearts

Charlotte, Taylor, Olivia, and Audrey have all received cards for Valentine's Day. Find each girl's card in this group of valentines. Read the clues to match the cards with the girls, but not all of the cards have a match. We've done the first one for you.



1. Taylor has a flower on her valentine.
2. Charlotte's, Taylor's, Olivia's, and Audrey's valentines all say who they are from.
3. Audrey's valentine has six hearts on it.
4. Charlotte's card has only words on it.
5. Two of the girls' cards have lace borders.

						
Taylor	no	yes	no	no	no	no
Charlotte						
Olivia						
Audrey						

This puzzle
idea was
submitted by
this issue's
Puzzle Pal.

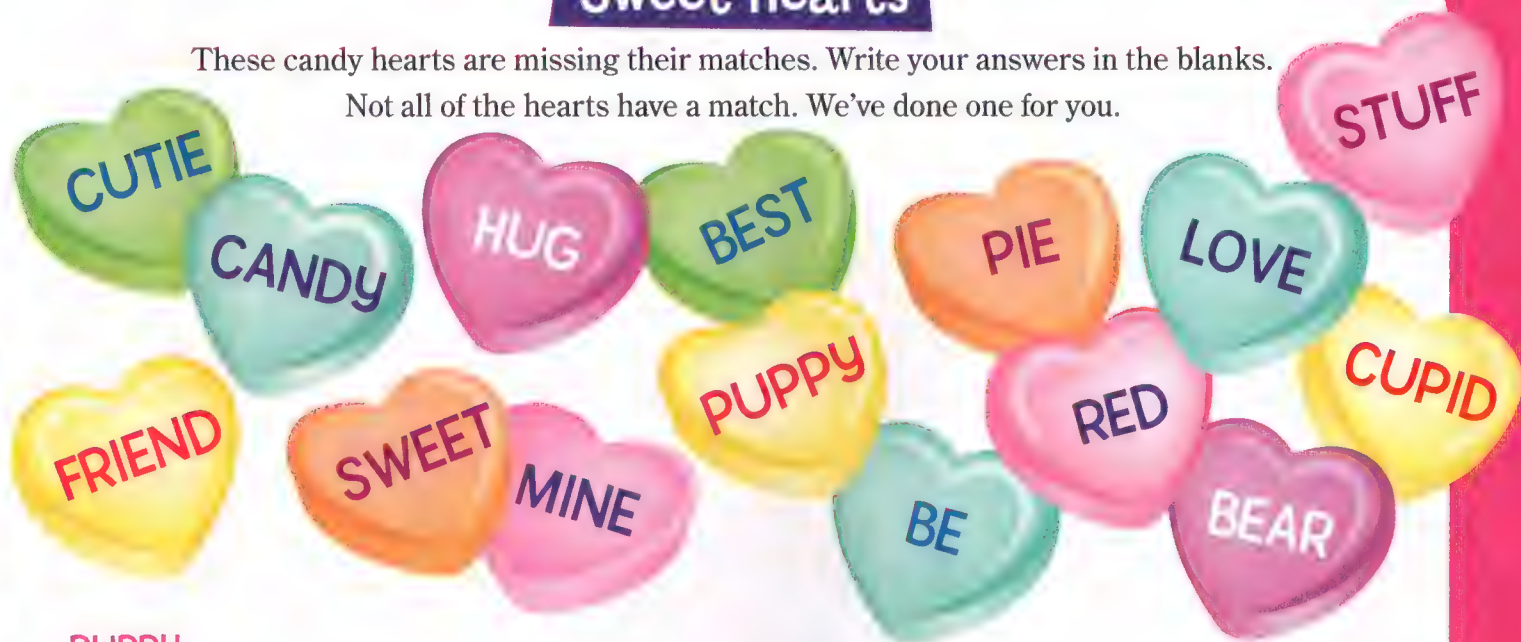


Hannah M.
Age 13, Wisconsin

Sweet Hearts

These candy hearts are missing their matches. Write your answers in the blanks.

Not all of the hearts have a match. We've done one for you.



PUPPY
LOVE

Heart Strings

Gabriella was knitting a scarf and dropped all of her yarn on the floor. Can you find six heart shapes in this pile of yarn?



Photo Fun

Sisters Teryna, Sydney, and Ania of Indiana are showing lots of love for one another in this cute photo. Can you find the strip that belongs in the picture?



Send your fun
photos to the
address on
page 7.

Answer

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

This issue's Buzzword is... **vermilion**

Lots of other words also mean "red." Can you find all of the words that are on this list?

Look forward, backward, up, and down to find words.

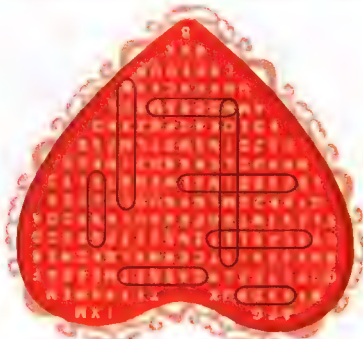
vermilion	cardinal
scarlet	rose
crimson	garnet
ruby	maroon

How to say it: ver-MIL-yun

What it means: a red-orange color

One way to use it: Stephanie used vermilion scrapbook paper when she made valentines for all of her friends.

Answer Box



Buzzword



Photo Fun

3.



Heart Strings

BE MINE, BEAR HUG, SWEET STUFF
PUPPY LOVE, CUTIE PIE, BEST FRIEND,

Sweet Hearts



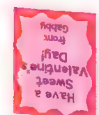
Audrey



Olivia



Taylor



Charlotte

Queens of Hearts



**Can I have
a hug?**

★ American Girl

Learn on me.



Photo: John Daniels/Ardea

☆ American Girl®

HELP!

Dear American Girl,

I LOVE desserts. Is it OK to eat them every day? And how much can I have? DESSERTS?

You can eat a little of any food and still be healthy. It might be OK to have a small square of chocolate every day—but maybe not a huge hunk of chocolate cake. Talk to your parents about what's best for you. In the meantime, look for healthier ways to satisfy your sweet tooth. Next time you want dessert, reach for dried fruit, low-fat frozen yogurt, or a fresh fruit smoothie instead.



Dear American Girl,

This is a strange problem. One of the classrooms at my school smells bad. I have a hard time concentrating. What do I do? nice nose

Catch your teacher alone and quietly mention this problem. Ask her to visit your desk during class to see if she can detect the stink and figure out a fix. It's best to not make a big deal of this since you don't know what's causing the smell. If it turns out that a classmate is the cause, it might be embarrassing to that person if you had complained loudly.



Dear American Girl,

I want to start a charity. But I don't know what to do, or who to do work for, or even how to get started.

I want to help

Start by paying attention to what's going on around your community. When you start to care about a problem—hungry kids or families, homeless animals, or a rundown park—you'll know that you have found your cause. Learn all you can about what others are already doing to help, and find out how you can fit into that. Ask a parent to help you get started.



Dear American Girl,

I'm almost nine, but I have a big secret. I still suck my thumb. I can't stop doing it! I've tried everything. Please help.

BIG problem

Do you suck your thumb when you're feeling stressed? If so, find another habit that calms you. Wear a ring that you can play with, or rub your thumbs together slowly. You also could wear a bandage on your thumb for a few days, which will help remind you to keep it dry. But be patient with yourself—after all, this is a longtime habit, and it will take some work to break it.



MORE HELP!

Dear American Girl,

When I got my first bad grade, I showed it to my parents. I hid my second bad grade in my folder. Now, I have a folder stuffed full of bad grades!

WHAT DO I DO?

It might be hard, but you've got to tell your parents about this. It'll be so much better for them to hear about your grades from you than from your teacher. Also, ask for help figuring out why your grades have been so low. You and your parents can work with your teacher to help you improve. Good luck.



Dear American Girl,

I found out that my new friend has been lying about herself to try to impress me. When I talked to her about it, she said she'd stop, but she hasn't.

What now?

Your friend must be feeling pretty insecure if she thinks she needs to lie to make herself sound better. Be patient with her as she works on this bad habit. Let her know that you like her just as she is and want

to be friends with her—but also that you know she's not always truthful. Next time she lies, try saying, "That's hard to believe." Be kind, but make your message clear.



Dear American Girl,

My friends and I signed up for the talent show. We were fighting all the time, though, so I quit. But now they've gotten these great costumes for the



show, and I'm feeling bad that I'm not in it. Should I go back?

talent show fight

It's hard to see your friends excited and not be a part of the fun. Your group is ready with their act and costumes, so it's probably too late for you to go back. Still, this doesn't mean that your friendship has to end. Say to your friends: "I'm sorry that things fell apart, but I know you'll do great in the show. I'll be cheering for you!" That'll mean a lot.



Dear American Girl,

It feels as if I'm the slowest, worst player on my basketball team. I think I'm hurting the team by playing. Should I quit?

team girl

Stay with the team for now. Because here's what's true: You can become a better player by practicing with players who have better skills. Also, if you go to practice, work hard, and try your best, you're being a good teammate—which is as important as scoring the most points. If you're still worried, talk to your coach.



even
MORE HELP!

Dear American Girl,

My best friend has been sad lately because some kids have been making fun of her. I've given her lots of advice and encouragement, but it doesn't make her feel any better.

Concerned friend

Being there for your friend makes you a good friend. You can keep supporting her by offering to go with her to report what's been happening. Tell a teacher, a parent, or another trusted adult. This is bullying, and it's hurting your friend. (Remember, telling is *not* tattling if you're trying to keep someone from being hurt.)



Dear American Girl,

My brother acts up on the bus. I sit by him all the time, but he still gets into trouble. He's about to be kicked off the bus, and my mom says it's all my fault for not controlling him.

brother trouble

Your mom must be frustrated that your brother is in trouble so often. But you can't control how he acts,



and it's not really fair of your mom to expect you to. During a calm moment, explain to your mom that you've done your best to help your brother and set a good example. But also tell her that you can't force him to stop misbehaving—after all, you have to stay out of trouble yourself. Maybe an adult at school who knows your brother might have some ideas for helping him to ride the bus successfully.



Dear American Girl,

My mom and I are always busy. I try to spend time with her, but I have sports and she teaches every day. Sunday is the only day we have free, but we're so tired by then.

Busy

Because you're both so busy, it's important to feel connected to your mom all week long. Tell her how you're feeling, and come up with a plan. Make the most of your car rides by talking or playing guessing games. Send each other text messages. Or leave a few extra minutes at bedtime to sit and talk in your room. You two can stay close, no matter how busy you are.



Advice from You

"If you've lost touch with a friend or need a do-over, ask her to join a club with you that you both like. My old friend and I joined a recycling group at school, and after a while, we were friends again."

Evan B.

Age 9, Illinois

Need advice? Got advice? Write: Help!

American Girl magazine

8400 Fairway Place

Middleton, WI 53562

These girls took photos of their animals for our contest because they all have heart-shaped spots!



Sophie C.
Age 11, Illinois



Shelby F.
Age 13, Minnesota



Amy G.
Age 12, New Jersey

To see more photos of heart-shaped things taken by girls, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Start the fun."

Behind the Scenes

American Girl wishes you a happy and heartwarming Valentine's Day!

Edie H., whose drawing of our May/June 2010 cover was in *Girls Express*, sent us a story along with her drawing: "My baby brother, Charlie, tore my drawing in half. I didn't yell at him because he gave me a sweet, innocent look, and I didn't have the heart to get mad at him." Edie taped it back together, and now it looks great in the magazine.



Molly K. (left), age 5, Jane K. (middle), age 11, and Elise O. (right), age 10, made the "Wee Sweets" that were featured in the July/August 2010 issue.



Julianna B., age 10, of Kentucky, tested out the "Sweet Shoes" cookies from our bowling party. They look good enough to feet!



You can make lots of other shapes using your "Sweet Spirals." Try making this pretty flower!



Play a fun bowling game on americangirlmagazine.com! Click on "Start the fun."



Friends Siena C. (left) and Mira T. (right), both age 10 from Canada, took a trip to New York City together. They found nearly 50 hearts, made a collage, and entered it in our contest.



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American Girl

Illustrations: Carol Yoshizumi

Coming up in the March/April issue of *American Girl* magazine

It's our all-animal issue!

Purr-fect Pairs

You won't believe the photos of girls who look just like their pets.

Giddyup!

Meet a girl who shares a special friendship with her horse.

Paws for Fun

Go wild for our jungle-themed crafts, recipes, and games!

Cute Critters

Free posters of the most adorable animals you've ever seen.



For more fun and games, go to americangirlmagazine.com and click on "Start the fun!"

AG's Valentine Frames

Punch out
here.

Punch out
here.

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